
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 203 (File 663, as amended by Senate "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING A STATE-WIDE SEXUAL ABUSE AND ASSAULT AWARENESS PROGRAM.

SUMMARY:

This bill requires, by July 1, 2015, the Department of Children and Families, together with the Department of Education (SDE) and Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc., or a similar organization, to identify or develop a statewide sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention program for use by regional and local school boards. The school boards must implement the program by October 1, 2015.

*Senate Amendment "A":

1. requires age-appropriate materials for grades kindergarten through 12, rather than for grades two through five;
2. requires the program to include sexual abuse and assault prevention, as well as awareness;
3. eliminates the participation of the Department of Social Services;
4. allows, rather than requires, the teachers' instructional modules to include certain training;
5. elaborates on the age-appropriate materials that may be taught;
6. delays the deadline to (a) identify or develop the program from January 1, 2015 to July 1, 2015 and (b) implement it from July 1, 2015 to October 1, 2015;
7. requires local and regional school boards, rather than the State Board of Education, to implement the program, and requires

that it be implemented in each school district, rather than in each public school; and

8. eliminates a requirement that the age-appropriate materials be made available on an SDE website.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

SEXUAL ABUSE AND ASSAULT AWARENESS PROGRAM

Under the bill, the program must include:

1. instructional modules for teachers;
2. age-appropriate educational materials for students in grades kindergarten through 12;
3. a uniform child sexual abuse and assault response policy and reporting procedure.

Under the bill, the instructional modules may include (1) training on preventing, identifying, and responding to child sexual abuse and assault and (2) resources to further student, teacher, and parental awareness of child sexual abuse and assault and its prevention.

The age-appropriate materials for students may include (1) skills in recognizing (a) child sexual abuse and assault, (b) boundary violations and unwanted forms of touching and contact, and (c) ways offenders groom or desensitize victims and (2) strategies to (a) promote disclosure, (b) reduce self-blame, and (c) mobilize bystanders.

The response policy and reporting procedure may include:

1. actions child victims may take to get help,
2. intervention and counseling options for child victims,
3. access to educational resources to help child victims succeed in school, and
4. uniform procedures for reporting instances of child sexual

abuse and assault to school staff.

Exemptions from Program

The bill allows students to opt out of the awareness program or any part of it if the student's parent or legal guardian so notifies the school board in writing. School boards must provide exempt students with opportunities for study or schoolwork when the student would otherwise be participating in the program.

BACKGROUND

Legislative History

The Senate referred the bill (File 38) to the Education Committee, which favorably reported it. The Senate then referred the bill to the Appropriations Committee, which favorably reported a substitute bill requiring SDE to make available on its website the age-appropriate educational materials for students in grades two through five (but see Amendment "A," above).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Committee on Children

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 12 Nay 0 (03/04/2014)

Education Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 28 Nay 0 (04/02/2014)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 44 Nay 0 (04/15/2014)